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THE YARUROS OF THE CAPANAPARO RIVER, VENEZUELA

By Vincenzo Petrullo

Introduction

121 The American primitive aborigines are rapidly becoming extinct. Some groups are dying out, and others are being assimilated in the lowest laboring classes of the various nations. In any case, the American aborigines, as first found by the sixteenth century explorers, are rarely met today. Only in a few spots, difficult of access or geographically undesirable to the Euro-American, can one find a few primitive peoples still eking out an existence as did their ancestors of four centuries ago. Some of these groups have had intermittent contact with European culture; others do not even know of it at first hand. It is these tribes which can furnish the key to many problems of American anthropology and to some extent to world anthropology, but there is need for haste in studying them, for they may not survive this generation.

511 A simple hunting and fishing culture is the most primitive economic existence. When such a culture has not been able to lift itself above the wood, shell, and bone stage, it should be ranked among the primary. The presence of the bow and pottery may lift a culture slightly above the Australian, but not very much so. The Yaruro culture described in the following pages can be classified as being on that level. Certainly it is as primitive as the Fuegian. The Yaruros, like most tribes of the South American tropical lowlands, have been handicapped by lack of stone in the country. Wood, shell, and bone were substituted until they came in contact with iron. Today they obtain scraps of iron, which they have learned to fashion into arrow points, from the cattle ranchers, but they would have done just as well without this new material.

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511 361 A people like the Yaruros are forced to economize in every aspect of their material culture. Literally they may have only that which they are able to transport with them. All the worldly possessions of each family must be crowded into one small dugout canoe. The

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superfluous needs to be dispensed with every time camp is moved, which occurs every few days. Only in thoughts and feelings can they be as rich as any other people; but this requires a particular kind of temperament possessed by only a few individuals in the tribe.

Their economic life, social organization, mythology, and religion form a well-knit pattern of existence. There are no loose ends, but a knot here and there appears in the form of vagueness or contradiction. But I think that the fault lies with us who would introduce our type of organization into their knowledge. We expect more from a primitive group than we ourselves could offer. Besides, it is doubtful whether we ever present the picture of their culture as they see it; if we did we might not understand or we might even be surprised at its orderliness.

Although the Yaruros have been in touch with Euro-American culture for several centuries they have borrowed remarkably little. What culture they possessed several centuries ago we do not know. There is practically no information about them in the literature. There is justification, therefore, in publishing this record, in spite of many apparent deficiencies. Since plans for another visit to fill in the gaps in my field notes have not materialized and the Yaruros may be gone before another ethnologist can live with them it seems advisable to make this material available.

Anthropology, among other things, is concerned with the interrelationships of groups of men and with the functions of social structures as developed by man and his environment. I have tried to keep in mind that in presenting a first account of an unknown people it may not be at all out of place to draw a general but intimate picture of the daily life of the Yaruros, their emotional, cognitive and conative responses to the world about them, and even their attitude toward the ethnologist who appeared among them with only the objective of holding friendly conversations about themselves. At first they were suspicious, but they soon caught the point and enjoyed the experience as much as I did. An attempt has been made to give these pictures, and to explain the series of events which made possible with these nomads the intimate association that followed the first few days of unfriendliness.

No attempt has been made to reconcile differences in the information obtained from various informants, not even if there is a contradiction. It was the first time that the Yaruros had been asked to organize their knowledge of their own culture; contradictions and vagueness were to be expected. My informants were exclusively men, even for those phases of culture which admittedly belong to the female world. A cultural obstacle which I respected prevented any direct social intercourse with the women. The women's domain is respected by the

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136 Bats are plentiful, but they tend to be most abundant in the forests and hills close to the Orinoco. Armies of them fly nightly out of the caves of Guiana to feed on the fruit of the forests in the plains. One evening while crossing back from Guiana to the llanos we saw a stream of bats flying across the river. They seemed to come from a cave about 2 miles away. Though we watched them flying overhead for about half an hour, there did not seem to be any end to them.

174 Formerly the llanos were peopled by a number of tribes who have since disappeared, leaving behind them practically no knowledge of their societies. Only the Yaruros and the Guahibos inhabiting the Meta region have survived to this day. The Tamanachi, the Guamos, the Otomacos, which are best but meagerly known, have died or been killed off in recent years. I saw the last Otomaco survivors, an old woman and a boy of five, who had been saved from a reputed massacre. The Achaguas seem to have disappeared in recent years also.

● 177 What has happened to these people can be easily understood when it is considered that during the past 25 years the worldwide unrest has driven adventurers to many corners of the earth, and these people have been exposed to the marauding "revolutionary" bands and to the equally destructive cupidity of the crocodile hunter and the rancher.

161 There are 150 Yaruros left in the region of the Capanaparo and
101 on an island at the mouth of that river called the Linda Bara. It is claimed that on the Sinaruco there are other bands but no contact was made with them. Formerly the Yaruros occupied a large territory and perhaps roamed the plains, as well as the rivers, but since the land has been taken up by the ranchers they have been forced to the river banks.

136 The animals of greatest interest to the Yaruros are: jaguar, puma, wild pigs, capibara (the chiguire), armadillo, snakes, jivaro stork, vultures, manatee, tonino, crocodiles, iguana.

137 Plant life has great importance as a source of food, usable wood,
222 medicines, and narcotics. The moriche and macanilla palms supply the Yaruros with fibers and bow wood. The chigua supplies him with flour; the changuango and barbaco with edible roots.

101 The Yaruros call themselves "Pumeh." In the literature they are referred to as "Saururi" (Gumilla), "Zavuri" (Gilii), and more recently as Jaruros, Sayuros, etc. According to my informants Yaruro or Jaruro, is a Guahibo word by which they are known to that people. The Guahibos are known to the Yaruros as "Tciricoa," "people of the forest." The word Pumeh has no exact translatable meaning. The closest equivalent is the Spanish "gente." When a Yaruro uses it he implies "the people," "the chosen people." Only the Yaruros are Pumeh, but the term occasionally includes other tribes. All non-

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aboriginal peoples are called by the Spanish word "Racionales" which is the equivalent of "civilizado," civilized. It was only after they came to the conclusion that I was a Pumeh also, and quite different from the Racionales, that they accepted me and made this study possible.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Yaruros are small and dark with a strong mongoloid appearance. The faces are heavy, broad, with the eyes very often showing the mongoloid fold. The average stature of the men is about 5 feet 3 inches and of the women about 4 feet 10 inches. One gets the impression that the heads are larger than the ordinary in comparison with the body size. The frame is light, both men and women possessing small, beautifully shaped hands and feet. The body is relatively hairless, as is usual among pure Indian peoples. They have strong teeth and seem to keep them until a very old age.

The Yaruros have had some contact with Europeans or mixtures of Spanish, Negro, and Indians for several centuries. Herrara reached the Meta River in 1535, and subsequently missions were established along the Orinoco and its tributaries. About 1750 a mission was established at La Urbana for the Otomacos, and one was later established at Barinas. Apparently at that time these people inhabited the region between the Capanaparo and the Apure. No missions were established for the Yaruros, and, according to Gilii, the Yaruros came to the Otomaco missions to be baptized. Father Gumilla wrote:

> Here, between the Sinaruco and Meta rivers were established the colonies of Santa Barbara and of San Juan Francisco Regis at the end of 1739, having pacified the Saruro (Yaruro) nation; of which nation Father Manuel Roman, the Superior of those missions, in a letter of February 20, 1740, gives me excellent news of their good will and docility and, which is receiving our teachings anxiously; with the hope that with the good example of these first two other Reductions will be established. He adds that in the colony of San Francisco de Borja of the same nation Sarura, of which Father Francisco de Olmo is in charge, who has reduced their language to writing and a dictionary, Christianity is flourishing; and that already schools for writing, reading, and singing are attended by children (a short while ago they were wild); and that they sing the mass, litanies, etc., in a fair way. So much does careful and diligent effort accomplish in those wild regions! Father Rogue Lubian takes care of the Santa Teresa village with the same efficiency; Father Jose Maria Cervillini is in charge of San Ignacio; he, with Brother Agustin de la Vega, attend as best they can the rest of the new villages, and they are clamoring for workers with the firm hope that you will send them as soon as possible.

Since there has been contact with the white man and some Negroes for several centuries, one would expect a certain amount of race mixture. However, I never saw a sign of the slightest trace of Negro blood. The hair which, more than any other characteristic, seems to indicate Negro contact, in the case of the Yaruro is coarse and straight,

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high and the hips carried well forward. As they walk along the soft sands they do not lean forward as a white man would to push against the yielding sands. The torso is held erect on the pelvis and the weight is shifted from hip to hip with the legs making a gliding motion beneath. In this way the walk is really a shifting of weight from one foot to another, the foot being planted almost flat on the ground. I noticed that on a hard trail the ball of the foot strikes the ground before the heel. They make a graceful picture as they walk about.

When sitting they double their legs under them, a position difficult to assume unless one has practiced it from childhood. The favorite sleeping posture is on the side with the knees drawn up close to the mouth. When sitting on the sands, if forced to pick up an object lying some distance away, the women especially would walk on all fours to it and bring it back without rising to a standing posture. In this manner I have seen women pick up firewood lying 50 yards away from the fire.

Loads are carried by men and women in nets suspended by a band from the forehead. Young children, who generally accompany their mothers on their food-gathering expeditions, are carried astride the hip, feeding at the breast as the mother goes about her work.

The physical endurance of the Yaruros is rather low. A day of hard paddling at a speed greater than their ordinary style, and they are exhausted. It is difficult to say whether this is due to their poor diet or simply to low racial vitality. It is certain that the American primitive is not as acclimated to the tropics as the Negro who, living on the same food as the Indian, will nevertheless outwork the latter.

The Yaruros today have been pushed to the Capanaparo and the Sinaruco Rivers. Rarely do they dare to wander far away from the banks of these two rivers. Since the days of the missions the indigenous tribes have been the victims of exploitation, even to the extent of enslavement. They are free booty for anyone who can catch them. The ranchers have sought to enslave the Yaruros, but an even more general sport has been the taking of the Yaruro women. Bandits and revolutionary groups sweeping along the llanos have not eased the Yaruro problem. Crocodile hunters, upon meeting with a band of Yaruros, will demand their women, and if the Yaruros should be reluctant to turn them over, death may be the price. I was told both by the Racionales, that is the peons, and the Yaruros, that about one month before I arrived in their midst about 150 Yaruros had been rounded up and killed by the local "Jefes Civiles." The Yaruros are a hunted people, and they know that their extermination is imminent.

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There is little to be found in the literature on the Yaruros. Among the missionaries they had the reputation of being too wild to tame. They were accused of being parricides and were called eaters of clay. The Tamanachi and the Otomacos seemed to have had a more complex economic culture and received much more attention from the missionaries; but the Yaruros, due to their own shyness, were considered to be scarcely human, and little was done with them. They seemed to be especially sensitive to any scolding or maltreatment. Gumilla, writing in 1791, says "Their fear, completely beyond reason, is the root of their inconstancy and is the dismay of all the writers: more delicate than glass; if they feel that the missionary has looked at them fixedly, if they hear a word less gentle, it is sure that they will run away and, moreover, will take with them the entire family." This statement may be an indication of the early treatment received by the Yaruros at the hands of the soldiers and missionaries. It is a fear which has persisted down through the centuries and is no less intense today.

Linguistically the Yaruros do not seem to be connected with any other South American group. On the basis of a few limited vocabularies several attempts have been made to link the Yaruros to the Saliva or the Betoya. An examination of the text produced in this study will show no obvious affinity to other language families. However, this is a matter for future study.[1]

ARCHEOLOGY

The llanos of Apure have become legendary for many things, even archeologically. In the entire region no excavations have been conducted, but stories are current of the variety of archeological remains. The Calzada is probably the most famous of them all. According to verbal descriptions obtained from geologists and other visitors to the llanos, the Calzada has the appearance of an elevated roadbed running eastward for many miles from some point at the foot of the Andes. In it and in small mounds close by it has been reported that pottery and skeletal material have been found. There is no doubt that archeological remains are primitive. As we traveled about the country we found that most of the squatters had archeological pieces of varying degrees of interest. At La Trinchera there were even two amateur archeologists. One thing is certain, the archeological material which was uncovered, and which is being reported in another paper, has no relation to any of the Yaruro material. It is therefore certain that the Yaruros have not always occupied the region.

[1] See Bibliography.

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It is well to note that the llanos form a sort of cul-de-sac from which there is only one escape, and that is by way of the Orinoco River. It is quite likely that the llanos have been the camping grounds and the highway for a number of tribes migrating northward, southward, or eastward. For peoples practicing agriculture, Guiana and the lower Orinoco region would be more suitable than the plains of Apure, where, on account of the strong winds and the sandy soil, it is difficult to carry on any cultivation of the soil. The mountainous regions to the north and west are also fit for agriculture. Therefore it was only the culturally poorer tribes that would remain in the llanos.

We have, therefore, in the following pages, a people who are primitive hunters, whose history is unknown, who do not seem to be linguistically related to any other group, and whose appearance is strongly mongoloid—who have been in contact not only with foreign indigenous culture but with some European culture, and who are facing physical and cultural extinction. Perhaps this last fact should be allowed to dominate this study, because it can throw into relief much of Yaruro culture and will remind us that anthropology is not so much signs of things as the signs of man, and that his problems and the way he solves them is as important, if not more important, than purely historical problems and theories. The opportunity of studying religion, social organization, and general spiritual culture of a South American tribe was so strong that during my stay with the Yaruros I concentrated with these phases of their culture rather than on the material phases or linguistic problems.

My Journey To and Life With the Yaruros

Contact with the Yaruros is not easy. No one ever knows near what water hole or at what point on the river these nomads may be found. Several centuries of maltreatment have made them shy and suspicious of strangers and particularly of all "Racionales." Primitive and loosely organized, they could not and cannot today offer any effective resistance to civilized groups which may want to exploit them. At the time of my visit everyone along our route was indignant over the treatment that about 150 Yaruros had received at the hands of unknown local "jefes civiles" about a month before. They were seized and matcheted to death, reducing the total population of this tribe (excluding bands that may be hidden along the Sinaruco River) to one-half. My presence in their midst naturally aroused fears that some fresh calamity was about to befall them.

In the rainy season there is only one way of penetrating the llanos of Apure, and that is by boat. From the Orinoco one can sail or

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hammock for me. They preferred to lie half buried in the sand, both for warmth and for protection from the mosquitoes.

Some of the bolder young men asked for rum. I had none with me. All along the road I had been told that rum was the only means of inducing the Indians to dance, but an ethnologist's work cannot be based on such an approach.

Through the diplomatic efforts of Maria, the Yaruros consented to sing and dance a little. I was able to arouse their interest in my flashlight, and to arouse their modesty and bewilderment when I flashed it upon them. My compass also drew an excited jabbering circle about me. But I was not able to engage them in conversation, and finally left them about midnight with the satisfaction that at least there had been no friction.

On the following day I sent them a pig, and later in the day again visited them. They were still shy and suspicious of me, but permitted me to go about the camp examining their artifacts.

There was not much to be done in this camp. The group was in a wretched state, still in mourning for their dead, living in fear of some fresh calamity, and although they were suffering hunger, too miserable to try to go back to the river where, at least, they would find food. Tribal customs prevented my engaging the old women in conversation and the men were too young and much too affected by llanero culture to tell me about their own people. Their advice, which I took, was to go farther south where we would find other Yaruro bands among whom I could find old men who could answer any questions.

I prevailed upon the leader of the band, Estaban, to accompany me. He was reluctant to go, not wanting to be separated from his young wife, and perhaps was afraid to trust himself alone with me. However, his desire for cloth and a mosquito netting was stronger than his fear. Estaban proved a loyal and faithful companion.

We found the next band encamped on a beach by the Capanaparo River. Here they were temporarily in the employ of a llanero engaged in building a house. For several days I had no more success with them than I had had with the other band, so during that time we studied whatever was on the surface. However, I was not doing all the studying. The Yaruros were watching me closely and weighing my statements carefully. During this time Estaban was busy building up my reputation. What impressed them most was that I did not ask for their women, and that all I wanted to do was to talk with them about themselves.

One night their attitude suddenly changed. I had been sitting for hours on the sands in the midst of these people, waiting for them to give me a sign of friendliness, but they were silent and apparently

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609 Yawalapiti village in Brazil; but the very silence was expressive of the mutual sorrow at our parting. Landaeta loaded me and my baggage in a canoe and we drifted slowly away, leaving on the vast beach a few human beings alone in a strange world, but not lonesome, since they live with their gods.

Economic Life

231 The Yaruros practice no agriculture and keep no domestic animals except the dog, even though they inhabit country over which roam wild horses and cattle, and they come in contact with the "llaneros," who are typically pastoral. Therefore, their daily dinner is dependent upon, and determined by, indigenous environment and their own
262 energy. The quality and abundance of their food supply depends upon seasonal variations of climate. A period of drought or a too prolonged period of rain may cause famine. They would be allowed a degree of freedom from the daily task of acquiring dinner were they able to store any food for future use. The tropics, however, offer special difficulties to this which are not present in more temperate climates. Their knowledge of what is edible in various localities, where to find it, how to gather it, and how to keep it and what is available at different times of the year are all factors important to the satisfaction of their most fundamental need. Technical knowledge in the making of tools and methods of hunting and fishing are also important.

262 784 As if not satisfied by the degree of their dependency on it, and on their technical knowledge, primitives often self-impose other limitations. There may be an abundance of a particular animal which could be hunted easily or a particular plant which could be gathered in quantity, yet the primitives very often raise barriers against such practices. The fact that they have religious and perhaps magical reasons for such attitudes explains but does not change the situation. Thus, for instance, among them deer may be plentiful in a region, the people may be starving, and yet no deer is killed and eaten.[3]

177 Limitations such as these are not entirely imposed by nature and by the culture of the people; often, the proximity and the attitude of other groups of mankind play their part. A weak tribe will be restricted in its lands over which it may wander, hunt, and claim ownership, and very often may be reduced to seeking a less desirable environment where food is even scarcer. Or a new people may seize its lands and they will be prohibited even from hunting on these lands. Or there may be an influx of peoples who will live partially on the hunt also, though their main source of food may be agricultural.

[3] The peoples of the Kuluene river, Matto Grosso, Brazil, will not hunt nor eat deer.

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In the case of the Yaruros all of these factors have played an important role and are currently active in reducing their territories and food supply to a degree that will mean imminent extermination of the people. It is true that since the first settler arrived in their country the Yaruros could have made readjustments in their culture which perhaps might have permitted them to survive. They could have learned, for instance, to raise horses, cattle, and to cultivate the soil as the Guajiros, living in a country similar to the llanos, have done. But they have chosen to remain firm in their own culture, own traditions, and own universe, and as a result are expecting to pay the penalty. Why they have failed to make the readjustment which would have brought them into a livable relationship with the newcomers and have persisted in keeping to their primitive, nomadic existence may be answered in the pages that follow.

Dependency on hunting, fishing, and gathering of edible fruits and roots imposes nomadism upon a people and prevents living together in large groups. The degree to which a people have to wander, the extent of the territory over which they must roam, and the size of the group, is dependent upon the abundance of the food supply in the region. The Yaruro hunting groups are small and they stay in one camp not more than a few days; so, they are to be met plying up and down the river in their canoes or traveling over land to the water holes, ever hunting for food.

HUNTING TERRITORIES

Each hunting group has a territory over which it is free to roam. Over this region only its members are allowed to hunt and gather fruits and roots, but the rivers, the main streams, are open to all. The accompanying map shows the limits of the present hunting territory of the Yaruros of the Capanaparo. It would seem that anciently, when the Yaruros were more numerous, they roamed over a vaster region cut up into small portions over which hunting rights were distributed among various hunting family groups. I was assured that the Yaruros of the Sinaruco also have divided their country into family units.

There is also a sort of division among the Yaruros which transcends family grouping. The Yaruros of the Capanaparo, for instance, consider themselves a unit, though loosely bound, as distinct from the Yaruros of the Sinaruco, so that they consider the land drained by the Capanaparo as theirs and the region drained by the Sinaruco as the land of the Yaruros of that river. And yet, above all this, there seems to be a tribal feeling as opposed to the tribal divisions. The real significance of this is that among the Yaruros there is permitted a degree of mutuality in the use of the hunting rights

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not allowed to the neighboring peoples, such as the Otomacos or the Achaguas. The social and linguistic bonds seem to be strong enough to cause the Yaruros to recognize themselves as a distinct people.

FOODS

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In the llanos food is not plentiful except in and along the rivers; but the foraging activities of the Yaruros are restricted to the banks of the Capanaparo and Sinaruco Rivers for another reason. The hunting of land animals has practically stopped for fear that they will be accused by the ranchers of killing cattle. In recent years the activities of the crocodile hunters have ruthlessly destroyed the game, and since such hunters live on the country they have consumed a portion of the available quantity of game on which the Yaruros depended for a livelihood.

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In the dry season game is concentrated along the rivers and the water holes. It is considerably easier to hunt it then than in the rainy season, when it is dispersed over the plains. The turtle, which is found in great quantities in the waters of the Orinoco and its tributaries, suffers a yearly mass hunt and destruction which has its effect on the food supply of the Yaruros. It has been discovered that the turtle fat and eggs will produce a fine grade of oil which sells for a high price. The result is that the breeding grounds of the turtles become yearly a scene of great activity and destruction. No one knows how many thousands of turtles and turtle eggs are gathered and converted into this oil late in the month of April.

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The meat staple of the Yaruros is the *Crocodilus babu*, a small crocodile which grows to about 6 feet long. This animal is hunted daily and eaten in its entirety. Its meat is esteemed above that of any other animal. On the other hand, the cayman, sought for its hide, is not hunted as a rule by the Yaruros. Perhaps this meat is not as savory as that of the babu, but the Yaruros give the reason that the large crocodile represents a race of mankind to which they are related. So that although occasionally it may be hunted for the price that its hide may bring, it is never eaten and never hunted consistently.

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Next to the crocodile, turtles, including the matamata and tortoise, are to be found broiling over the fires in every Yaruro camp, and if they are not broiling they can be seen in shallow pools of water with their forelegs tied to their hindlegs. In this way they can keep alive but cannot walk away. The armadillo is seldom obtained and other meats appear occasionally on the diet of the Yaruros. Fishing is resorted to when neither crocodiles nor turtles are obtainable. The caribe, which is the piranha of Brazil, is esteemed but little. The tonino, which can be seen gracefully playing in the water or can be heard snorting in the rivers at night, is never hunted. It also is

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

CANOES

[481] 501 502 868 The Yaruros dislike to travel any distance afoot. The canoe, therefore, is practically his only means of transportation. As a result, they are extraordinarily good canoemen, learning both how to build and to manage one from childhood. It is not an uncommon sight to see little children of 5 or 6 years of age paddling furiously in midstream. Their expertness can best be illustrated by the following incident: The llanos are exposed to the trade winds in the dry season, which at times blow very hard. On our return from La Urbana we found the crossing of the Orinoco to the mouth of the Capanaparo a dangerous undertaking.

The Yaruro dugouts are clumsy affairs at best, but in addition to that, ours had a gaping hole about 10 inches in diameter in the stern and it was with some qualms that I stepped into it to negotiate the rather rough waters with the help of a 12-year-old boy. Since the Yaruro steers from the bow, that place of honor was allotted to the youngster, I furnishing the power. During the passage across I despaired several times of being able to hold the canoe in the right direction, but whenever we found ourselves caught in some especially difficult whirlpool this lad would turn and laugh, not in derision but in encouragement, which was calculated, I suppose, to bolster my spirit, but helped not at all in easing the strain on my arms. His knowledge of the currents and his proper timing in signaling to me to paddle one way or the other, as well as deft steering, finally got us across safely. When this incident was over and I looked back over the rough waters, my respect for Yaruro canoemanship increased manifold.

502 177 Sails are used on the Orinoco and its tributaries, both by the occasional traders and crocodile hunters. The Yaruros have had ample opportunities over several centuries to learn how to make use of them. In fact, some of the younger men who worked occasionally for the ranchers, or traders, do know how. However, in their daily plying up and down the rivers, hunting and fishing, they never employ the sail.

[181] Their conservatism is further illustrated by another fact. The Racionales will always pole their canoes when traveling upstream. The Yaruros know how to do this also, but only when they are working for someone else. In their everyday life they depend entirely on the paddle.

502 The steersman generally sits in the bow, especially when moving downstream and the paddler is alone, pulling the canoe after him. The paddler in the stern, if one is present, really furnishes the motive power. The Yaruro generally paddles sitting down in the bot-

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

317 323 [302] [824] This same clay supplies the red and yellow ocher used for facial painting. The clay is tempered with the bark of the Mecla tree called "Toiin" in Yaruro. This bark is burned to an ash and the ashes are kneaded into the clay, which has been well moistened. Rolls of this clay are then made, coiled, and placed one upon another. They are then flattened and smoothed out by hand or with the help of a piece of shell, water being applied liberally. The clay rests on a dish of pottery which is revolved when necessary. After the pot has been built up and smoothed down it is left in the sun to dry for two days. At the proper time a base of wood is made,

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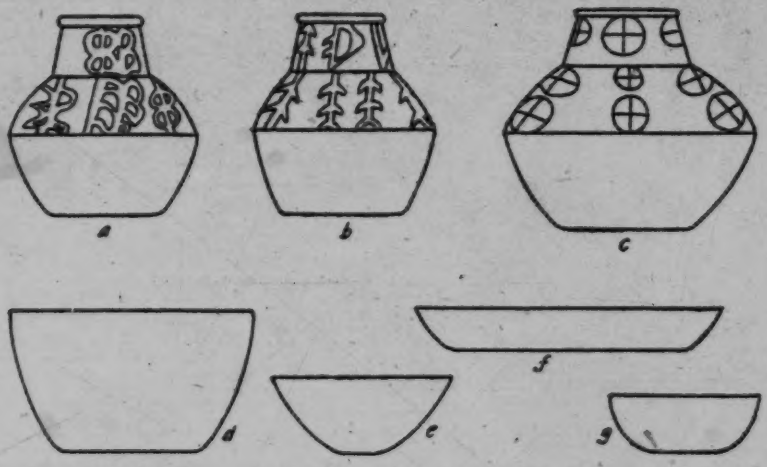

FIGURE 22.—Pottery forms and decorations. *a*, *b*, *c*, Water jars, showing painted designs. *d*, *e*, *g*, Bowls. *f*, Pottery plate used for toasting seeds.

the pottery placed on it and covered with other sticks, and then a hot fire bakes the pottery for about two hours. Such quick firing produces a poor quality of pottery, but leaves it porous. Since these pots are used only as water jars, this has the effect of keeping the water very cool (pl. 13, *2*; fig. 22).

CLOTHING

291 177 Most of the Yaruros whom I saw possessed some scrap of clothing which was worn both as protection against the weather and for social show. In many cases this clothing consisted of mere shreds, as can be seen in plate 15, *1*. The men wear coats and trousers or merely trousers. The women wear camisoles of the thinnest goods which in no way hides their nakedness. Most of this clothing is discarded when there are no visitors around camp, and

1 [see category 116, and plate 3 ----- Analyst]

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

291 after I had been among the Yaruros for a time the women often dis-
177 carded their camisoles, even though I were present.

The men would normally wear a breechclout which originally was
291 woven by the women from the fibers of the moriche palm leaf, but
286 now it consists of a piece of cloth. Formerly the women wove wide
462 belts of the same fiber for the men, but this is no longer done. The breechclout is held in place by a string tied around the waist.

The women, underneath their camisoles, still wear the old-fash-
291 ioned Yaruro girdle, which is made from the fibers of the moriche
287 palm. The fibers, which are about 2 feet long, are fastened together at one end. This end is slipped through a hair rope tied around the waist, and the whole mass of fibers passes between their legs and under the waist string. Plate 25, 4,[1] shows a Yaruro woman wearing one of these girdles. It is fastened in such a way that an enormous knot is formed in the rear, and when wearing their camisole the women have the appearance of sporting large tails.

562 The women on the whole seem to be more conservative than the
291 men in their clothing and body decorations. Below the knees and
301 around the ankles they wear a thin string, and often they have necklaces of carved asabache figures, which are shown in plate 21.

DELOUSING TOOL

412 An implement that is in great vogue is the delousing tool shown in
515 plate 20, 2. The serrated end is used as a comb to expose the lice, which are seized between the fingers and crushed between the teeth. The pointed end is employed to crush blisters raised on the body by
462 mosquito bites. These tools, also fashioned by the men, are used
302 exclusively by the women to groom their menfolk and each other.

CARRYING NETS

482 Carrying nets, of the knotless variety, are woven and used to
286 carry children and food. When carrying children the net is slung
854 across the chest from one shoulder; when carrying food it is supported by the head.

COOKING

252 The culinary art among the Yaruro is poorly developed. Much
462 of the fruit and the eggs are eaten raw. Fish is eaten half raw and the meat of the crocodiles and turtles is merely warmed over the fire. Sometimes the meat is boiled. In the afternoon the women who have gathered firewood are to be found in camp waiting patiently for the men. On the hot coals they will have eggs and changuango. If the hunt is successful, and no hunt is considered

1 [See category 116, and plate 15, Analyst]

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

Even if there were stronger interest in sex than seemed to exist, there would be little opportunity for the youngsters to indulge in any sexual relations, since their playmates tend to be parallel cousins and very often playmates are lacking altogether. In the small hunting groups often there may be only one or two unmarried young people. Under such conditions a boy would either have to seek sex relations with one of his moiety sisters or practice adultery with a woman of the opposite moiety living with his own hunting group. We may presume that neither incest nor adultery are unknown to the Yaruros. During my stay among them there was no evidence of that.

Another factor which tends to help the Yaruros live a strictly moral life is that upon reaching puberty both boys and girls marry if a mate is available, even though the wife or husband may be considerably older. Premarital romantic love life may be entirely absent on this account, but one suspects that another type of romanticism may be built on what is available. For instance, practically from babyhood the boy or girl knows whom he or she will marry and in waiting for the promised day one would suspect an emotional attitude is built up. It is certain that after marriage strong bonds of affection are developed between husband and wife. Strictly limited in choice, there can be no free play for one's desires.

In the Yaruro society prostitution is probably absent. I believe that today some degree of prostitution has been forced upon them by the peoples with whom they come in contact. Perhaps we should call it purchasing of sexual rights, with the Yaruros playing a docile if not hostile part. After all, they are forced to acquiesce in a great many practices foreign to their ideas.

The above is the sexual ambient. As a result the adults act in the following manner. Sexual intercourse is considered one of the numerous natural acts. It is not exaggerated, little talked or joked about, and judging from the sort of life they lead not over indulged in.

Among the men, woman is not discussed. Neither virtue nor sin is the subject of comment. She is let strictly alone and uncensored. Obscenity is rare.

If any homosexuality exists it must be established by inference. It is common among the hunting tribes for a man to have a companion with whom he hunts, travels, and with whom he spends most of his time. Such companionship seems to be closer before marriage than after.

I have observed two boys, unmarried because no girls were available, engaged in such acts as we are accustomed to impute to love making—holding hands, etc. Yet, lest we jump at hasty conclusions, it must be said that affection between men is demonstrated much more so than

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

185 775 culture or themselves against a superior culture and ruthless "civilized" bandits. Their only consolation is Kuma and the Land of Kuma.

781 821 Nevertheless, being realists they not only continue their daily activities of hunting and gathering foods, but also in finding daily solace through their environment and the shamanistic contact with Kuma. The Yaruro is nature conscious. Perhaps his lonely existence has made him ecstatically responsible to the world about him, for often they talked of the beauty of various phenomena; but stronger than any such feeling is their sense of intimate relationship with the sun, the moon, the stars, their animal life. The falling stars at night are interpreted by them to be messengers sent by Kuma to encourage her people, the Yaruros; the moon is friendly, and on moonless nights the stars represent the crowds of their ancestors 825 who live with Kuma. The wind blows incessantly and it blows to them the roar of the araguatos (the howlers), which, to them, represent distant relatives once human beings, but changed into monkeys by life in the trees at the time of the great flood; the toninos, frolicking at night in the water, are also another race who failed to climb the rope which Hatchawa let down to bring his people to the surface. It is in such a friendly world that the Yaruro literally sits, listens, 154 and looks, almost communing with his environment. Perhaps it is not out of place to mention at this point that this reaction on the part of the Yaruros is not difficult to understand, that perhaps we ought not to rationalize this attitude of the Yaruro entirely on the basis of superstition or religious ideas; anyone who has lived on the plains, exposed day and night to nature, soon loses any feeling of lonesomeness. This response on the part of the Yaruros is shared by the llaneros, who do not seem to be so perfectly at ease as when they are alone in the plains.

THE YARURO UNIVERSE

772 According to the Yaruros the world has experienced a series of metamorphoses. Some of the events which have transformed the world from its original form are attributed to the direct intervention of the various gods and races of mankind, but others remain unexplainable.

772 177 How much of Yaruro cosmic ideas have been borrowed from the missionaries it is difficult to say at this point. Missionaries have been among them from time to time but the Yaruros have been abandoned so completely so many times that the result and confusion is difficult if not impossible to unravel—a thing which can be done only when we have thorough descriptive studies of the various tribes of the Columbian plains and the tribes of Guiana. The comparative ma-

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

terial existing in the literature at the present time is too scant to give us much of a lead. For the Llanos of Venezuela we have only the missionaries' accounts of the middle of the eighteenth century, meager accounts at best, and highly colored by the ideas of the missionaries themselves. But even these give us no ideas as to how the Yaruros thought and behaved in those days. They give us notes only on the Otomacos and the Saliva. Perhaps material exists in unpublished form, but it must remain unknown for the purpose of the study.

In the mythology and in the shamanistic cult a number of figures stand out: Kuma, the mother goddess; Puaná, the great snake; Hatchawa, the culture hero; and Itciai, the jaguar. A more obscure figure is Kiberoh, who seems to be identified with a female evil spirit, but in one legend appears as the mate of Kuma. And an even more confused figure is India Rosa. It is known that the patron saint of the early Spaniards was Santa Rosa de Lima. If India Rosa is to be identified with Santa Rosa among the Yaruros, only the name has persisted. The confusion will become evident on reading the text.

The creation legend exists in various forms, but which of them represents the purely aboriginal one it is difficult if not impossible to determine. It seems best to give all versions. The myth of the flood appears also, and whether or not this is a foreign element in Yaruro mythology cannot be determined at this time. Of great interest to us are the ethical elements present in these stories. In the legend of the impregnation of Kuma, presumably by Puaná, the water snake, one may see a parallel to the story of Eve and the Serpent. Be that as it may, Puaná the Snake, Itciai the Jaguar, Kuma the Mother Goddess, and Hatchawa, the culture hero, are living spiritual forces among the Yaruros today, godheads who visit the Yaruro frequently during shamanistic performances and speak to the Yaruros through the mouth of the shaman. It would be too much to expect that all our facts should fit together into a logical pattern. The legendary world is never a well-ordered one and it speaks for the genuineness of Yaruro culture that we find such complex.

It will be noted that Kuma is definitely the Mother Goddess who gave birth to Hatchawa and to human beings. The latter were found by Hatchawa living under the ground. Hatchawa is always the culture hero. It is he who takes compassion on humanity and gives the fire, the bow and the arrow, and presumably a great many other things. Puaná, the Water Snake, is not only the shaper of the earth, but it is he who is given credit for great wisdom. Itciai, on the other hand, plays a very small role. In our legends he appears as a shaper or creator of the waters but plays no other part. But perhaps this obscurity of Itciai is to be attributed to the fact that my informants belong to the Puaná moiety.

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

criticism of Kuma, and there is even an implication that she always acts with the greatest wisdom.

THE LAND OF KUMA

Kuma lives in the west, apparently beyond the horizon. In the month of March and in early April, about 9 o'clock in the evening, there is a glow in the western sky, a beautiful phenomenon, which the Yaruros explained is the reflection from Kuma's land. Its exact geographic position does not seem to be known and is as hazy as a Catholic's idea of the position of Heaven. For instance, we are told that the stars are both the lights from Kuma Land and the people from that land walking about at night, and yet the Land of Kuma is localized somewhere in the west.

This land is described sometimes as a vast and clean savanna, treeless and full of game, and at other times as a savanna with a huge town in which Kuma and her people live. This latter conception springs from the association the modern Yaruros have between wealth, comfort, power, and those material things which the civilized peoples possess. Towns are included among the products of the civilized. In the same way we find that although the Yaruros are a horseless people, Kuma and her people seem to have an abundance of horses. Apparently those things which are denied the Yaruros in this land are to be found in the next and shamanism is the means of expressing the longings of the living Yaruros.

THE LAND OF KIBEROH

In contrast with the beautiful world in which Kuma lives and to which all Yaruros expect to go, Kiberoh rules over a dark land inhabited by those unfortunate races of mankind left in the hole when the rope dropped by Hatchawa was broken by a too-heavy pregnant woman. Not much is known, nor is there much interest on the part of the Yaruros about this unpleasant region. However, this must not be taken that they have a belief in hell as Father Gumilla reported. According to this author the Yaruros believed in an evil spirit called Tighitighi. On the contrary, my informants identified Tighitighi merely as a large hawk which has no relation to the devil.

PUANÁ

Puaná stands out as the indulgent parent and teacher of Hatchawa. He is also the artisan who invented all of the implements now used by the Yaruros. He is conceived of as the great snake, and in fact is so portrayed on the gourd rattles of the shamans, yet there is a

1: Petrullo E-8 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

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533
789 that follow describe this land as well as the gods and the spirits of the Yaruros.

It is to be noted that it is the ornaments worn by Kuma rather than
776 the person of the gods which are described. We are told that she
301 wears golden necklaces, fine clothes, and belts and bands typical of the ancient Yaruro woman's costume. She is represented vaguely as being in the form of a human being, who, on the other hand, is never described. Try as I might, I was not able to obtain any idea of her appearance. Hatchawa, as we know, is a little boy, but Itciai again lacks any definite form.

787 The shaman claims that during his ordinary life he has no idea of what he sees in the Land of Kuma, therefore these descriptions can only be gathered from due sources through the songs which he sings in shamanistic performances and through the figures which he etches out on the shamanistic gourd rattle. Several of these rattles are reproduced on plate 24 and figures 25, 26, 27.

The shaman does not claim special power to reveal anything, nor does he claim to have the power to cure. He is merely a vehicle or instrument through which the gods can visit the Yaruros by substituting themselves for the soul of the shaman. The only power that he claims is the ability to let his soul leave his body and travel to the Land of
787 Kuma. His soulless body subsequently becomes possessed by various
533 spirits who wish to communicate with their relatives on earth. As explained above, the shaman only sings the first songs hesitantly and in a poor voice which is in direct contrast to the violent and beautiful singing which the spirits exhibit when they are in possession of his body.

772 Kuma's Land is a perfect heaven for the Yaruro, who has endowed it with all the comforts and liberty denied to him in this world. In Kuma's Land food is abundant, the weather is ideal, there are no forests, no diseases, and most important of all, no civilized being to desolate them. We are confronted here with the creation on the part of the Yaruro of a superlative heaven which furnishes an escape for him from the woes of this life.

181 We have noted before that primitive peoples, when faced for a
177 time with a hopeless situation in this world, such as extinction, tend to seek and discover an escape by creating such a heaven. The Guarani sought a heaven in the West where there was no death and no persecution. More recently our own Indians on the reservations have turned to Peyoteism, which also supplies a heaven. In all these cases there is a renunciation of this world. The will to live is practically gone because there is no need to worry about maintaining life in this world, an impossible thing to do when in competition with civilization. But a heaven which cannot be touched by any civilized

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

invention offers a perfect refuge, even though it is only a philosophical one.

Mechanical aids to the shaman, in addition to his own psychological make-up, are: music and dance; tobacco, which he consumes in great quantities during his performance; tcuipah, a root with narcotic properties; caroto, which is a fermented or unfermented mixture of crushed maize and water, or manioc and water, and when obtainable, white rum. The extent to which these stimulants are used can be illustrated by the observations which are made in the course of one all-night performance: The shaman consumed 42 cigarettes which I offered him, about 100 cigars, which consisted of several strips of tobacco leaf wrapped in a thick green leaf obtained from one of the trees along the bank, about 6 inches of the tcuipah root, and about 2 quarts of the fermented maize-and-water mixture. Since these narcotics and stimulants were taken hurriedlly and in great quantities, it must have had a terrific physiological effect upon him. For instance, every cigarette and cigar was smoked completely through in 10 seconds. Each musical stanza lasted from about 10 to 15 seconds. He sang it first and then it was repeated by his people. It was during this repetition of his song that the shaman inhaled as much of the tobacco smoke as possible and then exhaled it just before commencing a new stanza.

In contrast with the rather violent shamanistic performance of the male shaman, the women do not seem to depend very much on narcotics. During the day the men are not permitted to sing or whistle, but the women may lie in their hammocks and sing. They may take small quantities of all of these narcotics, but as far as my observation went I never saw any of them consume any great quantity.

The spiritual world of the shaman is quite different from the everyday realistic world. A comparison of the carvings on the gourd rattles with the realistic carvings of the asabache made by anyone greatly demonstrates this. In the latter form of art expression, animals, birds, and scenes are copied with great accuracy and skill. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that if the shaman were to attempt the realistic representation of the spirit world he could do so, but he has chosen to portray the various gods and spirits almost symbolically. Kuma and Hatchawa were always represented holding up their hands. It is this position which is read into the western skies whenever at sunset there occurs a phenomenon described above. The rays of light emanating from the horizon represent the fingers of the hands of the gods.

The form of the dance has been described. It starts off as a simple walk around a pole and it may become a fast run in the evening,

1: Petrullo E-S (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

301 317 in small pieces on the banks of the Capanaparo. It is about as hard to work as coal. It has much the same appearance. The carving tool is the ordinary knife which, in some cases, may be a broken machete. 532 Yet, with such crude implements, they are able to produce exquisite realistic carvings of birds, fish, and other animals. 301 These are generally perforated and strung into a necklace. Each woman possesses at least a few of these carved figures, the number depending on the industry of her husband. No symbolical significance seems to be attached to either the painting, the carving, or to any of the designs appearing on the stamps. There may be some magical meaning to them, but all inquiries were answered in the negative.

791 787 532 534 The gourd rattles present an entirely different manifestation. In the first place, only the male shaman can use a rattle. It is, in fact, the badge of shamanism. All the designs appearing on the rattle represent what he sees during his visits to Kuma's land. These carvings are made with the point of any sharp instrument, which cuts in just deep enough to expose the lighter colored inner wood of the rattle.

To become a shaman one must dream of Kuma and the other gods, and show his people that he can communicate with the godheads when occasion demands. Perhaps looking at shamanistic practices objectively this may mean primarily that the would-be shaman has a fertile imagination and some artistic talent. I do not think that we ought to doubt that he believes that he actually sees and talks with Kuma, Itciai, and the rest of the spirit world.

791 787 532 776 He commemorates his dreams on the sacred rattle, carving out on its surface the figures which appear in his dreams. Kuma and Hatchawa dominate the decorations on the gourd rattles, and since those collected came from the Puaná moiety, Puaná is also portrayed. In plate 24 various views of one of these gourd rattles are shown. The large geometric figure dominating the first drawing represents Kuma; the smaller one Hatchawa. Rotating the rattle toward the left we discover Puaná, the Snake.

534 517 In connection with these rattles one of the most interesting aesthetic features is the filling in of space. All of the specimens collected and shown in figures 25, 26, and 27 demonstrate this. In watching Landaeta at work I asked him why he did so; his reply was that a properly decorated rattle must be "tsaimui", that is "good", "proper", "beautiful."

Music

534 177 One would suspect that the Yaruros would have borrowed some of the musical instruments employed by the Llaneros. Among the lat-

1[See category 116, end plate 14 --- Analyst]
2[See category 116, pp. 242-243 --- Analyst]

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

534 177 ter the harp is very popular. Flutes and whistles are also made by the Llaneros, but the gourd rattle, which consists of a small gourd containing coarse grains of sand, or seeds, is the instrument employed by the Yaruro shaman. Music, therefore, is produced by singing to the accompaniment of the rattle if the singer happens to be the [512] shaman. Since the men are prohibited from singing and whistling during the daytime there is no freedom of expression in this way. During the entire time that I stayed with these people I never heard anyone begin a song except the shaman. Whenever, for purposes of recording, I asked some of the men to hum some of the tunes they refused to do so.

533 Although there are a variety of tunes, the music apparently consists of one phrase repeated four times for each stanza of the song. Each stanza is begun in a high falsetto. The second phrase is sung an octave lower, and the last phrase, therefore, is four octaves lower [462] than the first. The woman shaman, however, has a song slightly different than the male shaman's song and their pattern seems to begin at the lower end of the scale for each phrase and repeating each phrase in the same range as the first. In both cases, each phrase covers the entire scale of six notes. The tempo is 1–2 time, with the accent on the off-beat, but at the height of the ceremonies the songs are syncopated. The intensity of the songs, the melodious quality of the phrases, and the oral repetition produces an effect similar to the negro spirituals.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for one to sing in tune with the Yaruros. Their scale is different from ours and they seem to have quarter tones. In addition to this peculiarity, they never seem to sing in a full voice, not in a falsetto, but in a style of their own, difficult for one trained in European music to master quickly. Of course the theory is that it is the gods and the ancestral spirits who composed both the music and the words and the people singing behind the shaman merely imitate these inspired songs.

533 535 The Yaruros have only one word to signify dancing and singing: "tohiwahimerekidi". The shaman, who is the leader in both these arts, is called "dancer" or "singer." In actual practice dancing is subordinate to singing, much as gesturing is subordinate to speaking among ourselves. Perhaps the correct translation of this word would be closer if rendered as "singing."

Dancing as an independent art does not exist. When it is practiced it is almost an outflow of singing. Singing may be done without dancing but dancing without singing is impossible. Every dancer sings, though every singer does not necessarily dance.

1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19
Venezuela SS1

Y 105 SS1

were accustomed to. That is, they had to fall back on a life somewhat similar to that of the Yaruros. Today one finds close to some river bank a little hut, the home of one of these Llaneros. In such a household one may find a man, his wife, and children. Their only possessions are what they can gather and make from their environment. They may have a garden in which they raise plantains and bananas, a little maize, and yucca. But the soil of the Llaneros is not fit for fertile gardens, so these people have to depend on hunting and fishing for most of their food. These are the people with whom the Yaruro have most contact. There is nothing in their houses and nothing in their mode of living to attract the Yaruro. As a matter of fact the Yaruros themselves made the comment that a Racionale's house was dirty and full of vermin and insect life, whereas they, preferring to live on the open beaches behind no shelter, had the advantage of moving about from one clean camp site to another.

Y 186

Y 177

How much the Yaruros have borrowed from Spanish lore and religious ideas it is impossible to say on a basis of our knowledge. In their religious ideas one might guess that the conception of the existence of an evil spirit and the personality of India Rosa may be the two strongest elements. All these, however, were introduced a long time ago and with the breaking off of communication with the missionaries during the past century they have become weaker and weaker. Today India Rosa is confused with Kuma. The evil spirit appears in only one or two legends and plays hardly any part in the shamanistic performances.

The tenor of the Yaruro culture is typically conservative. Their reaction to any European idea is one of suspicion and fear. For instance, they will not raise domestic animals or learn to cultivate gardens. The Yaruros had their chance, they say, when the world was created, and refused to take it. Now there is only one thing left to them: to live as their ancestors have done and to die.

Y 181

This patient acceptance of their lot is the most characteristic attitude of the Yaruros. They have abandoned all hope of maintaining themselves against the destructive forces of the world around them, and even of dying out peaceably. Their only consolation lies in their firm belief that Kuma is waiting for them in the other world. In other words, not unlike many other American aboriginal groups, they have built for themselves an indestructible heaven, and one from which foreign peoples will be excluded. There they will recapture their ancient mode of life. They will have plenty of food, clothing, horses, and the companionship of their relatives. Kuma's land is a world of bliss, an expression, really, of the living Yaruro's yearning to be allowed to hunt, fish, and live peacefully with each

182 72 first place, the ecological conditions to the north, west, and south were, if anything, more severe than their own, so that there was little advantage to gain by warring in these areas. To the east were the Orinoco highlands, mountainous and heavily wooded country, an ecology quite different from, and probably as difficult as, their own.

182 We may conclude then, that, with the given technology, and under the given ecological conditions peculiar to the Yaruro region, the possibility of evolving to a more advanced tropical forest type like the Kuikuru, or even the Carajá, who in a number of ecological respects are like the Yaruro, was extremely limited. Second, there was little possibility of circumventing this development by directly taking on Circum-Caribbean traits from nearby groups. The Yaruro had to remain, under native systems of [177] subsistence, which did not include the European-derived cattle herding now found in the llanos, at a fixed level of technology, with a fixed ecology, and hence with a fixed form of social structure. Only the recent exposure to cattle herding is breaking up the fundamental form of their economy.

Under any conceivable native conditions, the basic ecological relationships and forms would have had to remain essentially unchanged. We may therefore deduce that the concomitant socio-cultural structure would have had to remain unchanged. Yaruro society was, for ecological reasons, substantially at an evolutionary dead end.

000 With this view of Yaruro ecology and cultural development, we may turn to the question of what conditions of incipient tropical forest horticulture might have provided a foundation for evolution to a higher level. The inhibition of Yaruro development is a result of certain specific ecological limitations. Consequently, where those limitations do not exist or could be removed, one would find, other factors being equal, conditions under which incipient horticultural groups would evolve to higher levels of organization.

Holding technology constant, a much greater per cent of tillable to total land, say up to 50%[21] instead of 0.5%, would allow for an enormous increase in population - up to a hypothetical 12,500-15,000[22] - which would permit or rather demand, a more elaborate social organization. A marked seasonal fluctuation in the productivity of these lands, that is, in the production of surpluses, would provide a situation in which forms of stratification could appear. A proportionally greater dependence on these food resources requiring intensive labor in order to maximize yield per acre, as in the case of corn or yams, would provide the basis for more elaborate socio-political organization. Thus, manioc which produces the largest tubers in relatively *poorer*, weakly nitrogenous, soils, requires much less effort to produce the several millions of calories per acre mentioned above than do corn and yams in better soils in order to push their productivity up to the maximum half-million calories per acre. Corn and yams appear to produce more with intensive care such as hilling and weeding, as well as the use of bird-watchers, and the like, as the papers on both the Taino and the Sub-Andean which follow clearly indicate. Where manioc will not conveniently grow

[21,22 [For footnotes see p. 44, category 116 -- Analyst]

Most direct

622 commands, in so far as I was able to observe, were made in Spanish![4] — essentially
[191 in acculturation contexts. In general, they concerned village care, small services,
● 177] and the like. No occasion was observed of commanding older men, except for a married youth of 19, who was the youngest adult male in the village. The two or three commands he received during my stay went unnoticed, and, in one or two instances, were even directly contravened. The capitans of the Cinaruco river group and of Palmarito de Guachara both consistently complained that no one paid enough attention to them, and the Palmarito chief complained that he never was kept
[571] sufficiently informed of events by his people. The fact is that people do pretty much as they choose in all important decision-making situations which do not involve the community at large, or the relationship of some member of the community or the entire group to outsiders.[5] In the former situation, the chief serves as a consultative funnel through which the community discussion pours back and forth until the community achieves some clear but unstated consensus upon which
622 community members can act, individually of course. Only in the situations dealing
648 with outside groups does the Yaruro capitanship emerge as a more developed
[354] status which might metaphorically be described as a position similar to that of a minister of foreign relations. In behalf of his group, he talks with any representatives of outside groups, especially if they are non-Yaruro, and acts as gatherer of information and as channel of communication between the community and the outside entity. Even this is weakened, however, since it applies more by courtesy than by fact among the Yaruro themselves, and other members of the community may perform the same function even if to a somewhat smaller degree. It is also weakened in that no Yaruro is prevented from acting on his own with respect to non-Yaruro outsiders, and, in fact, many Yaruro do establish their own relationships with outsiders as a number of instances attested. Indeed, the rights of the individual members of the society to make their own decisions, at least internally if not also
[682] externally, is insisted on. In one instance, a chief who took it upon himself to

[4] Commands and other stress situations, which generally appear to be uncongenial to the Yaruro and more overt as the people have been more subject to acculturation, seem
[578] to elicit from the Yaruro Spanish responses rather than Yaruro ones. It is as though it
[152] were not fitting to utter commands or express anger in Yaruro. Thus, the few times
[191] noisy altercation was heard among the Cinaruco Yaruro, the language used was Spanish. The chief's commands and his overt anger were always expressed in Spanish, even if he had just before been speaking in Yaruro. Though anger may often be felt, it is not shown if the participants are expressing themselves in Yaruro. Thus, the chief scolded one of the village boys for riding one of the recently acquired burros — in Spanish; he ordered a 19-year old young man to do some task — in Spanish; he complained of the actions of one of the village elders in taking on the job of guide without first consulting him (though he would certainly have permitted it) — in Spanish.

[5] Cf. Leeds, 1960 a, with respect to the place of individual action in Yaruro society.
[181 Though there is individual action, choice, and responsibility, these are all carried out as an
114] aspect of community organization and essentially with community affirmation. A person is not an individual set in counterpoint to his society — there is no polarity of individual-society, as we, in our culture, generally seem to conceive. Individualism in the latter sense does not exist among the Yaruro. The Yaruro should not be mistaken for an individualistic culture, as, I suspect, several of the cultures described as individualistic in Mead, 1937, should not have been.

3:Leeds E-5 (1958) 1962 SS19 Yaruro SS19

represent his people to the outside world without consultation and to make arbitrary decisions for them inside the community — mainly in his own interest — was, with the consent of the community, assassinated by one of the members, now in excellent standing in that community as a respected shaman. The chief in question had stepped beyond the bounds designated for his status. In sum, the position of chief, even though formally recognized by Yaruro society and reinforced by formal recognition and appointment by Venezuelan authorities, is feeble as an institution and as a status.[6] It is our hypothesis that ecological conditions of Yaruro life determine the form of the chieftainship in such a way that its stronger institutionalization would be impossible, and we turn to this question now.

III

Yaruro subsistence activities[7] comprise swiddening, gathering, pig herding, hunting and fishing, mentioned in the order of their importance as contributors to the total food supply as measured in calories.[8] Horticulture probably provides 60—70% of the total annual food supply. The horticulture practiced is characteristic of tropical forest slash-and-burn gardens, with a slow rotation of plots in order to permit soil renewal and weed control. Trees are cut, at present with steel axes and formerly, apparently, with axes of bone or shell, and then burnt. Occasional fences are roughly made of the logs to keep out pigs. Bitter manioc (*Manihot utilissima*),[9] in several varieties, is the main crop, though sweet manioc (*Manihot aipi*), also in several varieties, is planted too, as are corn, bananas, sugar cane — each in several varieties — and a number of lesser crops such as melons, squashes, pumpkins, pineapples, sweet potatoes, and yautia or ocumo (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*). Crops are planted with a digging stick which may also be used in harvesting. Gardens are weeded, once only, early in the growth of the crops. Other than clearing, the only soil preparation is the construction of hills for planting bananas. This is done by burning hills made by a certain species of ants (*huachaquero*). The hills, which are quite wide and low, are filled with organic matter enriching the soil.[10] Harvesting is aided with baskets for carrying the crops. Baskets contain about half a bushel or less. No fertilization, no terracing, no drainage, no irrigation, no extensive turning of the soil is done.

The gathered resources include a number of roots, particularly changuango, changuanito, and guapo (*Maranta arundinacea*);[11] varied fruits, especially that of

[6] Professor Benjamin N. Nelson informs me that in medieval Spain, village communities had an official, also called *capitan*, whose function was to treat with state functionaries representing the world beyond the village community's frontier. It is possible that the Yaruro capitan, and many others in Venezuela, are an acculturative transfer of this office to tribal groups. In the case of the Yaruro, this would have happened some 250—300 years ago.

[7] The use, here, of the terms 'activity', 'tasks', 'techniques', 'tools', 'resources', and 'habitat' corresponds to the definitions given in Leeds, 1960 b.

[8] Cf. Leeds, 1961, which gives this data in detail and describes the habitat and horticulture *in extenso*.

[9] Native terms for these crops are given *ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*, note 9, contains data on soil values.

[11] Identifications are from Pittier, 1926.

4: Leeds E-5 (1958) 1960 SS19 Yaruro SS19

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along the west-to-east flowing rivers in ribbons some kilometers wide. Most significant fauna and flora of economic use occur in these ribbons. This ecological distribution of resources governs subsistence activities whether they be mainly hunting, fishing, collecting, or horticulture.

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Yaruro subsistence comprises all these activities. (2). Horticulture in the rainy season appears considerably to outweigh all other sources of food together, but in the dry season, hunting, fishing, and collecting perhaps equal or outstrip horticulture. In any case, slash and burn gardening of manioc, corn, plantains, and a number of lesser crops is by far the single most important economic activity. The technology is exceedingly simple in all aspects of

[442]

production, the main tools being the machete and digging stick. The most elaborate technology occurs in the conversion of food into edibles and in the manufacture of hammocks, pottery, objects of wood such as canoes, and woven containers of all types.

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The economic organization displays a sharp division of labor between men's and women's work. Men do all hunting and fishing, make all objects of wood, haul lumber and householding materials, make hammocks, and carry out the heavy labor of gardening. Women do most of the collecting of roots,

[222]

seeds, and fruits. Since collecting contributes a substantial portion of the food supply in summer, woman's contribution, here, is of considerable communal importance. Women's work, a continuous activity from dawn to dusk, is, first, the conversion of raw foodstuffs into edibles. Second, women make all pottery, mats and baskets, the manioc squeezers, and much of the cord used to make hammocks. Another important contribution of women is their help in harvesting in the gardens. Men sometimes help the women with the cookery.

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Men may work alone, in groups of 2 or 3, or in larger groups on rare occasions. No occasion exists for all men to work at a single task since there is no technological need for it. Women's work groups for collecting or household-

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ing are of similar size. Work group alignments are often based on choice or accident but in other instances coresidence and kinship are determinants. The household, however, constitutes the only really necessary cooperative group for production. The man is a funnel for produce which the woman converts to

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(2) The present description applies to the Cinaruco River Yaruro where the major part of the writer's field work, supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council, was done. The Capanaparo River Yaruro were reported by Petrullo (1939) and Le Besnerais (1948) as being hunters and gatherers, although Le Besnerais observed small horticultural patches which he claimed were diffusions from Venezuelan farmers which had occurred recently. Le Besnerais in 1954 states directly that they were horticulturalists, omitting any mention of possible diffusions from Venezuelans. The passing mention of horticulture by Pinsson (1947) confirms the present writer in his opinion that, although horticulture may be more restricted on the Capanaparo than on the Cinaruco and Cunaviche-Arauca (where the writer also spent several weeks) which are not discussed at all by Petrullo or Le Besnerais, nevertheless, the absence of horticulture is probably not aboriginal with the Yaruro as has been suggested by Kirchhoff (1948, p. 456). Rather the restricted gardening is a result of ecological conditions on the Capanaparo which are less favorable to horticulture than on the neighboring rivers, combined with extremely violent acculturation, including large-scale massacres of natives. The only other possibility, in my opinion, is that horticulture was introduced by the missionaries in the early part of the Eighteenth Century, which is certainly the period when the Yaruro first became acquainted with iron tools (cf Lodares, 1922).

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5. This paragraph had been published when we learned of Anthony Leeds' articles (see "infra" IV List...42 and 43). The latter considers that agriculture, which exists among the Yaruro, as we acknowledge further along, was introduced by missionaries at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

descendants of the first inhabitants, hunters and gatherers who invaded South America at the beginning of the Neolithic Age, as Father Cooper suggests, or are they groups of Indians who after diverse vicissitudes have degenerated and adapted their civilization to a new way of life, as Levi-Strauss insists?"

121 Immigrants or not, hunters, fishers, and gatherers who evolved, or agriculturists who regressed, we shall not make a choice here between these alternatives and shall limit ourselves to presenting two observations which, gone into more deeply, will eventually permit opting in favor of one of the theses before us.

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241 1) The tropical savanna inhabited by the Yaruro, as a consequence of the absence of extensive forests, is hardly propitious for primitive agriculture. The latter could, however, be carried out there on a small scale.

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241 The Yaruro, in fact, and contrary to Vicenzo Petrullo's observations, are not only gatherers, fishers, and hunters, but also practice agriculture, in general on land cleared in the forest corridors. Petrullo probably did not observe this aspect of their way of life (6) because he carried out his investigations

6. We made, moreover, the identical error in the course of our first investigations (see "infra" IV List...40).

the height of the dry season--when the soil /9/ is no longer

/9 cont./

172 of the Yaruro (7), or even remains of objects of the Yaruro of

7. See "infra" IV List...2.

former times, whose descendants have forgotten the techniques of making them?

c) History

175 We hardly know much more about their post-Colombian
177 history. Some Jesuit missionaries, as we mentioned above, had contacts with them on the bank of the Orinoco toward the middle of the eighteenth century (7).

7. See "infra" IV List...2.

193 Did they leave some sort of imprint on their culture? This
177 we do not know. In any case the Yaruro do not seem to have
648 preserved any memory of it, if it isn't the fear of bearded men on the part of the children. They do remember /10/ on the other hand for a more recent period some battles which put in opposition in the course of a civil war on the Capanaparo even the Venezuelans against each other.

177 The important event of the last years (1920-1940) remains for them the installation of Racionales (9) on the Capanaparo,

9. Venezuelans

an installation the repercussions of which, as much on their way of life and the social, economic, and religious structure of their society as on their sanitary conditions and their demographic situation (illnesses and, at a certain period, repression), have been and continue to be considerable.

7: Leeds E-4, 5 (1958) 1964 SS19 Yaruro SS19

and warfare as supra-tribal distribution mechanisms. It is interesting to note that the cultural characteristics ascribed to each of the peoples — "warlike," "peaceable," "brabo" — are ecologically funcional, in that they mirror value orientations which tend to drive people to maximize the food resources in ways appropriate to their socio-ecological environments.

Fourth, the evidence seems to me at present to point to the existence throughout the area, of pre-hispanic horticulture, enjoyed by at least some groups within each tribe, if not by all groups in part of every year. The evidence comes from the reports of travellers, missionaries, and from the archeological remnants, such as they at present are. The main Spanish and Venezuelan acculturational effects with respect to subsistence appear to have been the introduction of iron tools; seeds and plants not of native origin, such as sugar cane and bananas; and, here and there, cattle, pigs, or chickens.

Fifth, the evidence suggests a steady deculturation in an area capable of maintaining a more elaborate level of culture. One may hypothesize either that groups like the Yaruro came into the area with a level of culture reflected by the Arauquín-style remants and then gradually deculturated both pre-hispanically and in post-conquest times, to their present level, or that they intruded into such a culture at a time when they themselves were at a more elaborate level, and then deculturated largely under Spanish influence. It will probably be possible to shed light on this question with the historical data.

In summary, if these hypotheses are correct, the entire interpretation of the llanos area between the Andes and the Orinoco highlands, as well as of other nearby areas assertedly inhabited by so-called marginal tribes, is quite different from that presented by the *Handbook of South American Indians*. The marginals of northern South America seem to evanesce, and a picture of a highly complex ecological system in which horticulture is of central importance, even if not quantitatively predominant in this ecologically restricted area, appears. This picture seems to conform better to the recent archeological hypotheses of Cruxent and Rouse (1958-1959), to the historical mentions of horticulture, to the presently scanty archeological and linguistic materials, and to more recent ethnological data.

I have not, as yet, been able to make any determination whatever with respect to clanship, totemism, or matricross-cousin marriage. I hope that with a study of the word lists discovered and with possible older ethnographic data that this problem may be resolved. My own field data suggests an organization into demes with bilateral marriages between cross-cousins or between an ego and his parallel cousin's offspring. This interpretation incidentally tallies with, or at least does not contradict, the data, such as the genealogies, kin terminology, and locality features described by Petrullo in all pasages where inferences and assertions as to the existence of these institutions do not occur.